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UNCLAS PRETORIA 005259

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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA'S APPROACH TO OPEN SKIES

REFTEL: A) Ray Walser-Ian Phillips 24Nov04 email

B) PRETORIA 5072

(U) Sensitive But Unclassified. Not for Internet Distribution.

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Dr. Ian Phillips, Special Advisor to Transport Minister Jeffrey Radebe, met with Econ M-C and Econoff to clarify recent comments about the SAG's approach to proposed Open Skies talks with the United States (Reftel A) and to discuss the Minister's upcoming visit to the United States. At the Minister's request, Department of Transport Director of Aviation Regulations Godfrey Selepe is drafting a list of pros and cons in a proposed Open Skies agreement. Selepe will provide explanations and proposed solutions to obstacles to such an agreement. Radebe could possibly sign an Open Skies agreement with the United States during his January visit or bring a negotiating team to initiate Open Skies talks. Radebe is tentatively planning to arrive in New York on January 23 and stay three to four days. He would then travel to Washington for one to two days. Phillips indicated that the Minister prefers the visit to be as productive and educational as possible. END SUMMARY.

OPEN SKIES

2. (SBU) Dr. Ian Phillips, Special Advisor to Transport Minister Jeffrey Radebe, met with Econ M-C and Econoff December 3 to clarify recent comments about the SAG's approach to proposed Open Skies talks with the United States (Reftel A) and to discuss the Minister's upcoming visit to the United States. According to Phillips, Radebe instructed Department of Transport Director of Aviation Regulations Godfrey Selepe to provide him a briefing memo on an Open Skies agreement with the United States including a list of pros and cons. In preparing the memo, Selepe is to offer explanations for each obstacle and propose solutions. The list memo is to be submitted to the Minister within a week.

3. (SBU) Phillips said that he envisages two possible courses of action during Radebe's January trip to the United States. One, if the SAG decides to support a full Open Skies agreement with the United States, Radebe could possibly sign the agreement during his January visit. Two, if it is decided that a full Open Skies agreement is not possible at this time, Radebe will bring Selepe and his negotiating team to Washington in January to begin talks to explore solutions to obstacles. Phillips admitted that the second scenario is most likely.

MINISTER'S VISIT

4. (SBU) Phillips said that Radebe is tentatively planning to arrive in New York on January 23 and stay three to four days. He would then travel to Washington for one to two days. Selepe's team will join Radebe in Washington if talks are needed. Radebe will likely travel with a small delegation including Dr. Phillips, Godfrey Selepe, Deputy Director-General for Public Transport Lucky Montana, and Professor van Niekerk (Maritime advisor to the Minister).

5. (SBU) Phillips indicated that the Minister prefers to minimize protocol and ceremony and, instead, focus on making the visit as productive and educational as possible. He is particularly interested in the organizational infrastructure of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DoT), how its agencies interact, and how DoT addresses funding issues and restraints. While in New York, the Minister would also like to learn more about how DoT administers its maritime and aviation ports, the Container Security Initiative, and the synergies of the public transport system.

